9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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Nyakyusa

swept through BuNyakyusa in the early 1930's; perhaps other similar movements preceded it—we do not know. What is clear is that traditionally there was continuous public pressure to overcome hatred within the village and the kinship group; to rid oneself of it by confession and an expression of goodwill. In pagan thought Utopia is a society without witches or sorcerers and, though it was never achieved, everyone is convinced that formerly these evil-doers were fewer than now, because they were restrained by law, whereas 'witches' now go scot-free.

The interests of the Nyakyusa are personal and practical. Health, fertility, and amity between kinsmen and neighbours are what they seek. It is with rain and drought, with the rise of the Lake or the striking of lightning which destroys property; with stock, crops, and the wild animals which prey upon them that the myths are concerned. We could trace no tales of the sun, moon, and stars, and no rituals are directed to them. Reference is made to volcanic disturbance in the myths of the heroes—'the ground rumbled' when Nkekete and Kyala walked, and there are stories of small lakes disappearing and reappearing elsewhere—but the concern shown is surprisingly little if an eruption indeed destroyed villages last century as Mr. Harkin's single informant suggests (*vide supra*, p. 16).

Reality is thought to be revealed to men in dreams, by prophets who 'go down thinking like the roots of a tree' to the world of the shades, and by oracles. What men seek to know are the causes of misfortune—public and private—and the identity of witches. Occasionally, it is said, a prophet has looked into the future and foretold drought, or flood, or the coming of Europeans—'white things on the Lake'—against whom it would be foolish to fight, but for the most part they are concerned with the misfortunes that exist, and urging men to pray in the groves. The contemplative is not honoured in Nyakyusa tradition; the man of spiritual power is a detective—a discoverer of evil-doers—or an administrator whose awfulness adds to his authority.

Men are preoccupied with their relationships to other living men—their kinsmen, neighbours, and fellow office-holders—and with their dead fathers. They are not concerned with their relationship to Kyala. The rituals celebrated by kinsmen are directed to the shades not to any supreme God, and it is quarrelling between kinsmen that angers the shades and makes the celebration of certain rituals necessary. The communal rituals are

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cattle in the district in the 1941 census was about 2.3 head per taxpayer or 55 head per square mile. Certain land is set aside each year for grazing, where stock is not able to interfere with the produce plots. Compensation for trespass of cattle on cultivated land is only paid among people of the lake shore.

Parts of the land to the west of Tukuyu have been badly eroded by cultivation and over-grazing, and it is only since 1935 that anti-erosion rules have been made to check the tendency for bad cultivation. Since they were brought in, however, the majority of the tribe have become very keen on seeing the effect that well-controlled cultivation has on crops. The following are the Native Authority Rules concerning anti-erosion:—

"Throughout the Rungwa District, all natives shall follow orders regarding cultivation designed to prevent soil erosion as demonstrated and enjoined by the Agricultural Officer.

(*a*) All ridges and terraces shall be contoured and not follow the slope of the hill.

(*b*) In the case of cultivation done on the flat and not on ridges or terraces, a large ridge and ditch shall be dug at the top of the plot to remain permanently and be repaired from time to time."

The Wanyakyusa have never been dependant on outside sources for any of their food, but in their own territory there is no iron for making hoes nor clay for making earthenware pots. The former they were accustomed to get from Ukinga, on the eastern boundary of the district in the Livingstone mountains, and the pots were, and are still, made only by about 500 members of the Wakisi tribe living in a village on the lake shore at the extreme south-western point of the district. The Wakisi are really of Ukinga origin and inhabit the eastern, northern and western shores of Lake Nyasa. They grow no food except cassava, and that only recently, and apart from the one village that makes the pots, their only work is as paddlers of canoes and fishermen. Most of their fish and pots are exchanged for food.

Since the Tukuyu District is so thickly populated and the inhabitants concentrated, it has been found necessary to create produce markets at comparatively short distances. Transport from these markets, during wartime, has become difficult. The natural outlet for Tukuyu native foodstuffs is the Lupa Goldfields, which lie about 100 miles to the

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438 north. Before the war, the goldfields gave work
316 to about 15,000 natives, chiefly Wanyakyusa,
[464] and most of the foodstuffs from this district went there. The goldfields are gradually closing due to difficulties in obtaining spares, and it has been necessary to look for outlets for Tukuyu produce elsewhere. Should the goldfields open again after the war, and large-scale mining start, there is a great future for produce grown in Tukuyu.

434 The main income of the tribe is derived from agricultural, military, mining and public works sources, and it is estimated that in 1941 the average annual income per man, woman and child was about Sh. 10 per year. It has risen considerably since, as over 4,000 men have joined the military and a large part of their salaries comes back to the district in the form of remittances. The agricultural source, from which a larger part of the tribal income
[464] accrues, is from sales of rice, maize and other foodstuffs. A fair number of Wanyakyusa also work on the tea plantations.

241 The picture sketched above will show that the district is inhabited by a tribe whose agriculture is of great interest, since the variety of crops, from wheat in the highlands to paddy and cotton on the lake shore, is perhaps unrivalled in so small an area elsewhere in
181 East Africa. It has not been possible to fill in the picture with details of the people's character, but it is worth mentioning that the Wanyakyusa are a people difficult to administer, argumentative, litigious, self-willed and at times inclined to truculence. Nevertheless their intelligence is such that they are willing to be persuaded, and, once convinced of the benefit of any change, adopt it with energy. This is instanced by the way they have in a few years accepted the principles of anti-erosion to such an extent that now there is perhaps 90 per cent control in the well-populated areas. It should, however, be stressed
134 that, though the soil is not being eroded to
241 any great extent, it is still being impoverished, since increased cultivation for the war effort has involved breaking a great deal of new land with a consequent lessening of fallow. Overcropping in the hilly country is very great and, in order to prevent further emigration, it be-
[185] hoves the native planters to learn to put something back into the soil in the form of mulch or compost. If care is not taken, a comparatively prosperous country will one day become like so many parts of Africa, where a losing struggle is fought with Nature to obtain a sufficiency for the people's needs.

on 21st September, 1943)